

February 25, 1957

Dr. Victor Twitty
Department of Biology
Stanford University
California

Dear Victor:

We had a very pleasant and constructive visit with Cliff over the weekend, even managing to spend about 20 minutes on science rather than sciencemanship. We did not necessarily agree on every item of discussion, and I hope you won't hold him responsible for my conclusions. Cliff's coming to Stanford should be a wonderful thing for both of you.

You and I had agreed to wait until now for a decision, but I am going to toss the ball back to you, and just lay the facts on the table.

Assuming we move at all, we inevitably have to make comparisons, and these are not so much odious as complicated. A longer and optimistic view might impel us the other way, but we have decided for Berkeley in terms of the status quo now, provided that a number of issues there, which have been settled informally, are ratified. These issues consist mainly of Esther's employment and laboratory facilities: it is one of Stanford's real virtues that they were settled without fuss.

I would not want to go into a point-by-point analysis of this preference, if only for fear of exposing some of their irrational bases. One of the more critical considerations was the intellectual support in microbiology that, for example, Roger Stanier would be for us, and our students especially, at Berkeley. If there were some way that someone like him could be installed on the Stanford campus, it would upset our thinking most drastically.

So there are two contingencies that could justify keeping the door open: 1) that Berkeley may not, in fact, be able to deliver what the Genetics Dept. hopes for. It may be another two or three months before that is sealed. 2) that you could see some point in prolonging and widening our discussion of the prospects of Microbiology in the immediate future. There are two other issues that have been on my mind, but which obviously don't belong in this context: who and what Biochemistry will be (which involves more than whom the Committee will try to get) and the ultimate prospects for a development in medical genetics. My impression on the latter is that the Stanford Medical School will have enough of a problem in financing and organizing its basic facilities that it will not be much interested in innovations for quite a while.

You would certainly have every good reason to feel that the two contingencies

are so vague that you ought to go on to alternatives. But I would like to leave this decision up to you. I will of course let you know as soon as we have undertaken any irrevocable course of action. Let me say that we do appreciate the positive aspects of the Stanford life, and that these are likely to become more appealing as we get older, and Berkeley smoggier and more crowded. But at this particular stage in my research activity, it is better that we not take too long-term a view. Ten or twelve years ago, I could not possibly have conceived my present situation, or current trilemma, and I can't possibly look that far into the future.

Reading quite willing to keep the pot boiling if you think it justified; I could understand it just as well if you wanted to start other fires.

You did ask what I thought of other possible courses of action, and Cliff did too. On that premise, and the one that we should no longer temporize, here are my own comments. At Berkeley too I would be vitally interested in your actions.

First of all, I do agree with Cliff that you might well reconsider whether you want only a geneticist for your major appointment, or how narrowly to construe that field. Obviously you do want someone who will both complement and strengthen the entente that you and Dave and Cliff represent, but if Cliff can suggest a particularly appealing candidate in any other field, it is not obvious that he should be passed over for not being a geneticist.

Roman and McClintock were mentioned as being under current consideration. I understand Roman is now in Paris. He is an outstanding cytogeneticist; my own feeling is that he was doing more interesting work with maize than he has been lately with yeast, though he made an important contribution in re-Mandelizing the latter. If he were to continue with yeast work (he dropped corn work at Seattle for climatic reasons) I judge he would come too close to Dave's specialized interests in tetrad analysis. For a smallish genetics group this would be unwise (despite Dave's probably contrary opinion).

I am astonished that McClintock should be under serious consideration for this post. She is a remarkable scientist, and I owe her a great deal personally, but she is a lone-wolf to the extreme. If you can arrange an ivory-cornfield she would certainly be an embellishment to Stanford, but she is making her best scientific contribution just where she is, by choice in a non-academic situation. She is already thinking about her retirement! you might make a most magnanimous gesture by planning to offer her an emeritus post in due course (though she's only 55).

My own favorite suggestion is Luca Cavalli, no doubt partly for reasons of personal attachment, though I'm sure you would be impartial in the same fashion. Our scientific interests are very nearly congruent; as you know we have collaborated very considerably already on the F compatibility system and the genetics of drug resistance. He ~~knows~~ has been an alter ego in scientific thinking to an uneasy degree. His English writing is rather more lucid than mine, and his speech impeccable. He is of 1921-22 vintage. It would be a profound delight to me if we were stationed at the distance of Palo Alto to Berkeley, but I hope you will believe me that this enthusiasm is based on the same good judgment as leads me to recommend him to you.

The greatest difficulty is, of course, that he is at Milan and not likely, as far as I know, to be visiting the US before Summer 1958 for the Montreal Genetics Congress. But here is an obvious proposal:

Cavalli is definitely interested now in coming to the US. He has strong personal and family ties in Italy, of course, and he has so far held off suggestions that he come over here, but the lack of academic opportunities and the isolation of his talent have changed his mind. As the most effective means for him to find a good place, I suggested he come to Wisconsin on a senior fellowship; to this he has not yet replied. Would it not be a good strategy for Stanford to offer him a one-year's visiting professorship for, say, September 1957-1958, if he can arrange his affairs by then? This would involve no longer commitment on either side, but give an ample opportunity for mutual acquaintanceship. Since I could not move before summer 1958 it would not even interfere with my own availability, though I suspect after he's been with you a while you will consider yourself better off with him. In any case, we should certainly have reached a firm conclusion *entre nous* well before this September. It seems to me unlikely that any senior candidate whom you could begin to approach now would want to be pressed to move before summer 1958, so I don't see how you can lose at all!

The Italian scale is even further from real values than the American; \$12 000 should cover both his travel and a salary attractive enough to interest him for the initial year, so I know you can afford to do this.

I wish I had a detailed vita for a dossier on Cavalli; I will enclose what I can dig up. I will be seeing him in London, and will be more than pleased to be an intermediary if you have any instructions. I am enclosing an itinerary of our trip (and will call you from SFO— if Cliff is in town at the same time, maybe we can all get together//.)

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Of course, Cavalli is not the only candidate you will want to consider, but I honestly think he'd be your best choice, and there are few other people in the US who know him so well. Perhaps Dave Perkins has met him, and I'm sure that Tatua and Stanier would have something to say. Buzzatt's-Traverse is his uncle (by marriage). The people in this department (e.g. Jim Crow) are equally well impressed. Both Cavallis would be outstanding members of the Palo Alto community.

Who else? The most promising geneticists I can think of are K. C. Atwood (Oak Ridge) and Avron Mitchison (Edinburgh). Atwood may be too Neurophysiological to be best suited for Stanford, but he is an extremely able person. Mitchison is interested in histocompatibility and in tumor-cell genetics, and would be an admirable counterpoise for Cliff. We have our eyes on both Atwood and Mitchison for Medical Genetics here, but don't let that impede your possible interest. [I ought to be the first to insist on their freedom of action!]

The Medical School here has formally adopted a proposal for a Department of Medical Genetics. This still has to clear some higher channels, and some details on relationships with Genetics (Agr.) have to be worked out. The Dept. will consist of Newton Morton, myself and another appointee. While I am very pleased to be able to attend at the delivery, this development has been quite independent of Californiana, and we have still to decide whether to move at all. We should be able to make this decision promptly, as soon as a single alternative is fixed.

Ether and I are very grateful for your sympathy and forbearance in dealing with us. If nothing else came out of these negotiations, they would still have left some personal values.

Sincerely,

CC: Cliff

Joshua Lederberg